is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an on-going process and accordingly policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary, with a view to making agricultural exports increasingly viable while keeping in view the domestic requirements.

Export Policy is being constantly updated and export regime in respect of agricultural products has been liberalised. Very few items are now either prohibited for exports or their exports restricted or are subject to quantitive ceiling. Major items for which the exports are banned include cow meat, beef, wheat, onions and sugar (except for sugar under preferential quota to EU/USA).

The agricultural products exported from India include tea, coffee, raw cotton, rice (basmati and non-basmati), coarse grains, tobacco, spices, cashew, scasame and niger seeds, oil meal extractions, sugar horticulture and flori culture products, fresh fruits and vegetables, processed fruits and juices.

Export of Onion

786. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry had cautioned the Ministry of Agriculture in August, 1998 to stop export of onions;

(b) if so, whether the advice was heeded by the Ministry of Agriculture; and

(c) if answer to part (b) be in the negative, whether this is the only reasons which caused crisis of onions in the domestic market?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Ministry of Commerce had requested the Ministry of Agriculture to communicate to NAFED that export of onions may be restricted temporarily till the price situation eases. In order to restrict export of onion,""NAFED enhanced the minimum export price of onion. As a result of this, only 2539 tonnes of onions was exported in September, 1998, as compared to 40300 tonnes exported in September, 1997. Export of onion was banned on 12th October 1998.

Export Targets

787. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the target to be achieved for exports during the next five years;

(b) the details category-wise; and

(c) the steps Government are taking to achieve this target?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The targets are fixed annually by the Ministry. An export target of 20% in dollar terms has been fixed for the year 1998-99.

(b) Based on the overall target of 20% in dollar terms fixed for 1998-v9 the details of provisional targets fixed for different commodity groups for the year 1998-99 are as follows:

Items	Value in US $ Million
1. Plantations	900
2. Agri. & Allied Products	3984
3. Marine Products	1400
4. Ores and Minerals	1252
5. Leather & Manufactures	1700
6. Gems and Jewellery	5800
7. Sports Goods	86
8. Chemicals & Allied Products	5128
9. Engineering Goods	4800
10. Electronics Hardware	962
11. Textiles including Handicrafts and Carpets	10370
12. Cotton Raw	250
13. Petroleum Products	550
14. Other Miscellaneous Exports	1100
15. Comnuter Software	2518
Total	40800

Given the overall world recession and South East Asian crisis impacting on export growth prospects in various categories, the export targets may need revision.

(c) A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiativs, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. A Cabinet Committee on Foreign trade has also been set up to review the export performance.

Cardamom Export

788. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether cardamom export from the country has registered a steel fall in the last two decades;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the remedial steps taken to boost exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The main reasons for decline in export of Cardamom are as follows:

(i) Uncompetitive prices of Indian cardamom in the international market vis-a-vis Guatemalan cardamom.

(ii) Stiff price competition offered by Guatemalan cardamom on account of its large production, high productivity and large exportable surpluses on account of absence of domestic demand.

(iii) Shift in consumer preference in the Middle-East markets towards the low priced Guatemalan cardamom.

(c) Some of the steps taken to boost export of cardamom include inter-alia;

(i) exemption of cess on export of cardamom;

(ii) reimbursement of air freight charges at the rate of Rs. 20 per Kg. for export of small cardamom in consumer packs by air to Middle-East destinations;

(iii) sponsoring trade delegations and participation in trade fairs abroad.

Export of Horticulture Products From A.P.

789. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Agriculture and processed Food Products Export Development Authority propose to set up an industrial estate for food processing units in Kuppam in Chittor district (A.P.) for boosting exports of horticulture products;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Andhra Pradesh Goverriment thereto; and

(c) the grants proposed to be given in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authroity has a scheme for extending financial assistance for setting up of special infrastructural facilities and for conducting feasibility studies relating to export promotion of agro products. Under the above scheme assistance and be provided to the State Government on receipt of a proposal for the same.